

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SIL-01 LAB-04 COME-00
/075 W
-----098552 141436Z /46

R 140854Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1212
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USAFC
USAREUR

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USAFC, USAREUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJ: HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SET COURSE FOR OCTOBER 1978 ELECTIONS

REF: (A) FRANKFURT 0884 (NOTAL)
(B) FRANKFURT A-004 (NOTAL)

1. EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF CONTROVERSY PRECIPITATED BY A SHORT-LIVED FEMINIST REVOLT, THE HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION IN WIESBADEN ON MARCH 11, 1978 WAS A TAME AND EVEN LACKLUSTER AFFAIR, CAPPED BY AN APPEARANCE OF
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CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT BEFORE 259 DELEGATES AND APPROX A THOUSAND GUESTS, THE CONVENTION DID, HOWEVER, SET THE TONE FOR THE SPD'S EFFORT TO RETAIN POWER IN HESSE AND OUTLINED THE MAIN THRUST OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT'S POLITICAL ARGUMENTATION DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THAT END ON ELECTION DAY, OCTOBER 8, 1978.

2. THE MODERATE AND CAREFULLY BALANCED PROGRAM FOR GOVERNING LAND HESSE FROM 1978 TO 1982 WAS ADOPTED WITH VIRTUALLY NO DEBATE AS PROPOSED BY THE HESSIAN SPD GOVERNING BOARD.

3. THE MORE DELICATE BUSINESS OF APPROVING THE "LAND" LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR SEATS IN THE LANDTAG PRESENTED ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE DIFFICULTY. THIS OCCURED WHEN THE FEMALE CONTINGENT OF THE CONVENTION, CROSSING IDEOLOGICAL LINES, OBJECTED TO WHAT THEY CHARGED TO BE

INADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ON THAT PORTION OF THE LIST OF CANDIDATES (I.E. THE FIRST 50 NAMES) WHICH HAS ANY CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED UNDER GERMANYS MODIFIED PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM. AFTER SHORT BUT SPIRITED EXCHANGES THE LIST WAS IN THE END APPROVED IN THE ORDER INITIALLY PROPOSED BY THE LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING 5 WOMEN AMONG THE FIRST 50 CANDIDATES. POLITICALLY THE NET RESULT OF THE LIST OF CANDIDATES, AS DEVELOPED BY THE LEADERSHIP AND APPROVED BY THE CONVENTION., REPRESENTS A SLIGHT SHIFT IN FAVOR OF SPD MODERATES AT THE EXPENSE OF SHOUTH HESSIAN LEFT-WINGERS.

4. STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE SPD AS A RESPONSIBLE MODERATE "PEOPLES PARTY" (SIC CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT) WITH CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE COMMON MAN AND PROVIDING CLEAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT WILL BE THE IMAGE WHICH THE HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WILL DO THEIR BEST TO PROJECT IN THE NEXT 6 TO 7 MONTHS. TO MAKE THAT IMAGE AS CREDIBLE AS POSSIBLE., THE LEADERSHIP WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP ITS LEFT WING INTELLECTUALS UNDER TIGHT WRAPS WHILE EMPHASIZING ITS TIES WITH AND SUPPORT FOR LABOR AND THE TRADE UNIONS. CARE WILL BE TAKEN TO AVOID ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT JEOPARDIZE THE SPD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FDP AND PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUING THE COALITION. THE OPPOSITION WILL BE REPRESENTED AS LIKELY TO BE DANGEROUS TO STABILITY AT HOME AND TO GERMANYS STANDING AND REPUTATION ABROAD. ALFRED DREGGER HIMSELF WILL BE IDENTIFIED HEAVILY WITH FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS AND THE SPD WILL ASSERT THAT HE IS SEEKING THE MINISTER-PRESIDENCY IN WIESBADEN ONLY AS A STEPPING STONE TOWARD FULFILLMENT OF HIS LARGER AMBITIONS AS NATIONAL LEADER OF THE UNION AND PERHAPS ITS CANDIDATE FOR FEDERAL CHANCELLOR IN 1980.

5. COMMENT: WHETHER THESE THEMES WILL BE PERSUASIVE TO THE ELECTORATE IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL. CERTAINLY THE SPD'S CHANCES LOOK A GOOD DEAL BETTER NOW THAN THEY

DID IN THE HALF-YEAR FOLLOWING THE DISASTROUS DEFEATS
THE PARTY SUFFERED IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF
MARCH 20, 1977, BUT THERE ARE STILL ALMOST 7 MONTHS TO
GO IN WHICH MANY THINGS CAN HAPPEN, PARTICULARLY SINCE
THERE IS WIDESPEAD RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF
THIS STATE ELECTION IN SHAPING THE FUTURE COURSE OF
GERMAN POLITICS ON THE NATIONAL SCENE. MOREOVER
DREGGER'S ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITIES, HIS ATTENTION TO
DETAIL AT THE GRASS ROOT LEVEL, HIS PERSONAL
ATTRACTIVENESS AND THE ADVANTAGES CONFERRED ON THE
HESSIAN CDU BY A STRING OF VICTORIES UNDER HIS LEADER-
SHIP IN RECENT YEARS ARE FORMIDABLE FACTORS. IT WILL
BE A HARD FOUGHT CAMPAIGN WITH ALL THE PRINCIPALS
INVOLVED MAKING A HEAVY INVESTMENT IN PERSONAL EFFORT.
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AT THIS TIME THE OUTCOME REMAINS UNCERTAIN. LEHMANN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, ELECTIONS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978FRANKF02101
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780113-0286
Format: TEL
From: FRANKFURT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780372/aaaacjds.tel
Line Count: 137
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 78f2f5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 FRANKFURT 884, 78 FRANKFURT A-4
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3344361
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HESSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SET COURSE FOR OCTOBER 1978 ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, GE
To: STATE BONN
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/78f2f5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014